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The Fulbright Mission

The "fact-finding" mission assigned to Sen. Fulbright by President Johnson may have a significance that goes considerably beyond Cyprus, Greece and Turkey.

In asking Sen. Fulbright to take on this assignment, the President seemingly chose to indicate dramatically the confidence he reposes in the author of the "myths and realities" speech on our foreign policy.

Recently Richard M. Nixon commented sourly that Fulbright's observations were 75 per cent shared by the Administration. We welcome the evidence that he may have been right.

At the time of Fulbright's challenge to the country to think "unthinkable" thoughts, President Johnson limited his demurral to Cuba and Panama, where, he said, Fulbright did not "represent the policy of the Administration."

But Fulbright dealt with a much wider

foreign affairs agenda, with the myth of the Communist monolith, for example, as well as our frozen attitude toward China and the vacillations of our over-all attitude toward Latin America.

Moreover, beyond his specific recommendations and observations, there was an urgent plea for a new style and substance in our thinking and debating.

"We are clinging to old myths in the face of new realities," Fulbright said, "and we seek to escape the contradictions by narrowing the permissible bounds of public discussion, by relegating an increasing number of ideas and viewpoints to a growing category of 'unthinkable thoughts.'"

Mr. Johnson's gesture toward Fulbright would appear to underscore this plea for purging from our national air the paralyzing poisons which still linger from the McCarthy era.